

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A21

THE WASHINGTON POST
13 March 1981

U.S. Says Soviets Tried To Blackmail U.S. Attache

Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, March 12 — The U.S. Embassy acknowledged for the first time today that Soviet security agents attempted to blackmail and recruit two U.S. military attaches recently and it labeled a Soviet press account of the incident as "falsehoods."

The embassy issued a statement following publication today of an article in the daily Sovetskaya Rossiya that accused Maj. James R. Holbrook and Lt. Col. Thomas A. Spencer of drunkenness and sexual promiscuity, reiterating a Feb. 20 attack by the official Tass news agency. Until today the incident was not reported here.

The State Department has filed a protest without disclosing details. Today an embassy spokesman said that the two officers "were subjected to a crude attempt at blackmail and recruitment organized and carried out by Soviet officials."